1: Hoebel E-5 (1933) 1940 NO6 Comanche NO6

224 The hunt was orderly and cooperative. By custom each person was expected to follow the rules of the game, and no marshals or soldier-police governed the procedure or exercised any administrative control whatever. Just how leadership of the hunt was managed was not uncovered. That there was a leader is certain. Presumably, one of the war leaders with special hunting skill was the man who directed the manoeuvering of the band and supervised the scouts. Whether he was appointed to the directing position or merely assumed it by common consent cannot be said.

First the herd was located by scouts. Then the entire band of hunters stalked it, coming up against the wind. When within striking distance all the men lined up "to get an even start," and then all charged the animals. The main function of the simultaneous charge was to prevent the scattering of the herds by a few individuals, but equally important was the need to kill as many buffalo as quickly as possible so that they would not get overheated in long running. Their meat would then spoil before it could be cured.

Each buffalo was butchered by the women of the man who had slain it and belonged to the man who killed it, identification being made by means of characteristic markings on the arrows.

● 105 The Comanches cultivated no plants but obtained a certain amount of corn and most of their tobacco in trade with the Mexicans of the Southwest. The tacit non-interference of these same colonial Spaniards in New Mexico made it possible for the Comanche, with the Kiowa, to obtain quantities of these goods and other articles as booty in raids upon the Mexican settlements further south. From the Kiowa and Wichita, also, corn was obtained. Seeds and berries were also utilized.

The material culture of the Comanches was relatively meagre and was of the general Plains type. Families lived in buffalo hide tipis of the twenty-two pole variety laid upon a four-pole foundation, but they were also accustomed to build small brush arbors as wind and sun screens. Somewhat enlarged, these arbors serve as customary summer homes for practically all Comanche families at the present time. Various tools of stone and bone were used in their industries and as weapons of war. The war club, spear and bow and arrow served as offensive armament, while defensive armor for the horse was made of tough raw-hide plates covered with pitch-cemented sand.[15] Many warriors carried the round buffalo-hide medicine shield as well as quivers and bow coverings. Saddles, a modified Spanish type, were made by men for their own use, though in later times Mexican captives

[15] From the traditional Ponca account of the first meeting and early fights with the Comanche from whom the Ponca obtained their first horses. Cf., Fletcher and LaFlesche, *The Omaha Tribe* (Report, Bureau of American Ethnology, vol. 27, 1906), pp. 79–80.

1: Hoebel E-5 (1933) 1940 NO6 Comanche NO6

specialized in this trade. There was no pottery or weaving known to them. 105
Clothes were of finely tanned and smoked hides. The clothing of the men was mostly confined to thigh-length leggings and moccasins, both of which are distinguished for their long fringes, although buckskin shirts were also made for winter use. The women wore typical Plains Indian buckskin dresses.[19]

Decorated raw-hide boxes were used for storing the cured and pounded dried meat (pemmican), which was prepared in large quantities at the time of the fall hunt.[20] A similar box was used for storing ceremonial clothes.

Dogs were numerous in the Comanche camps. Though used as burden 231
bearers in more ancient times, the horse had displaced them in this function, so that they had lost their sole economic excuse for a place in Comanche life. Yet they held a position which mere economic utility would never have granted. Like the horse, the dog was esteemed for non-utilitarian ends. Dogs were protected because of their affinity to Coyote, that lovable and annoying rascal of Comanche folkloristic belief. No Comanche will kill a dog or coyote, because of the fear of misfortune. The thought of eating dog meat is nauseating to them. Dogs, however, were maintained as household pets, taking a very personal place in the family. In childless lodges they were petted and indulged, even to the point of being privileged to ride horse-back when the household was on the move.

The crude economic picture of the Comanches in the last century is one 105
of a tribe with a simple culture adapted to high mobility, which, in a setting of buffalo plenty and prosperity of booty derived from enterprising raiding and trading in the Spanish territories, freed the Comanches from problems of economic want. Much of the Comanche male's energy was directed toward individual aggrandizement in war and coup-counting and the maintenance of prestige within the tribe. The law picture is largely a reflection of this.

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[19] Clark Wissler, *Indians of the Plains* (American Museum of Natural History, Handbook Series, No. 1, 1934), pp. 50–54.

[20] Leslie Spier, *An Analysis of Plains Indian Parfleche Decoration* (University of Washington Publications in Anthropology, vol. 1, 1925), pp. 89–112, for a comprehensive treatment of the rawhide box and its decoration.

20: Wallace H-4,5 (1 15) 1953 NO6 Comanche NO6

The
West Texas Historical Association
Year Book

VOL. XXIX OCTOBER, 1953

The publication committee and the editors disclaim responsibility for views expressed by contributors to the YEAR BOOK.

THE COMANCHES ON THE WHITE MAN'S ROAD*

ERNEST WALLACE

The Comanches constituted one of the major tribes of the southern Great Plains. They came down from the north shortly after 1700 and within a quarter of a century had established themselves as lords over a vast area extending from the Arkansas River on the north to the Hill Country around San Antonio on the south, and from the Cross Timbers or approximately along the line of the ninety-eighth meridian on the east to the Pecos River and the mountains above its headwaters on the west. For a century and a half these spartans of the prairies successfully repelled all efforts of both red men and white men to encroach on their hunting grounds, while at the same time they pillaged Mexican communities far south of the Rio Grande and made the frontier settlements of the Anglo-Americans unsafe.

Comanche culture was of the typical plains Indian character. The Comanches were nomadic hunters, warriors, and raiders. They had no agriculture (in historic time, at least);

* Ernest Wallace and E. Adamson Hoebel, The Comanches (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1952) is a study of the old way of life of the Comanches. Acculturation and twentieth century development are topics outside the scope of that study. Surrounded after their capitulation by whites who regarded their own civilization inferior to none, the Comanches, for lack of any alternative, reluctantly proceeded to accept in part the civilization of their conqueror or, as the Comanches say, "the White Man's Road." This article, taking up where the book leaves them, attempts to trace briefly the historical development of the Comanches after they were compelled to accept life on the reservation. In addition to the cited source material, this article is supported by field work of the author among the Comanches in the summer of 1948.

20: Wallace H-4,5 (1945) 1953 NO6 Comanche NO6

105 no permanent villages. The horse provided means for rapid and relatively easy transportation across the vast expanses and, as a medium of exchange, it was a tangible form of capital wealth.

177 But the Comanches were over-powered eventually by the Americans. Americans crossed the Comanche hunting grounds on their way to Santa Fe and California frequently after 1846 and spread diseases that ravaged the Comanches more disastrously than the bullets from the guns of the soldiers and pioneers. The six-shooter proved to be for mounted men a superior weapon to the Indian bow and arrow. The iron horse moved across the prairies with a speed and an endurance that set at naught that of the Indian pony, bringing swarms of hunters, settlers, and soldiers into the Comanche hunting grounds. The hunters with a new, superior rifle began a reckless slaughter of the buffalo, and without the buffalo the Comanches could not possibly continue their old way of life. Armed cowboys drove their herds of hardy longhorn cattle farther and farther west to graze the nutritious grasses of the buffalo range until they were ready to trade in Abilene or in Dodge City for Yankee dollars. After the Civil War the government was in position to undertake vigorous military action.

618 657 These factors brought the United States government and the Comanches together in a peace council. By the Treaty of Medicine Lodge in 1867 the Comanches and their allies, the Kiowas and the Kiowa-Apaches, were assigned a reservation of almost three million acres in Southwestern Oklahoma. [13] The reservation was bounded on the east by the ninety-eighth meridian, on the north by the Washita River to a point thirty miles above Fort Cobb and thence by a line due west to the North Fork of Red River, and on the south and west by the Red River and its North Fork. The treaty permitted the United States to construct railroads, roads, military posts, schools, and an agency—none of which the Comanches wanted. The government for its part agreed to provide annuity goods for a period of thirty years while the Indians were making the transition to an agricultural econ-

29: Hoebel E-4,5 (1933) 1969 N06 Comanche N06

ing domains at the expense of some of their neighbors. The British companies encouraged their tribes to drive off the French-allied tribes, and they gave them guns wherewith to do it. The French responded in kind, and the tribes of either party used their new weapons to drive the unarmed tribes on the western frontier before them. Thus with pressure behind them and an attractive lure before them, a number of the tribes of the Mississippi Valley sought sanctuary and prosperity in the relatively unpopulated lands of the West. The Comanches were among them.

. . .

The Comanches . . . appear in the sixteenth century to have occupied the country that lay around the headwaters of the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers. They were an eastern branch of the far-flung Shoshonean group of tribes and at that time it is unlikely that they would have been distinguishable from other eastern Shoshoneans. But in the eighteenth century the Comanches moved down into the southern Plains, while the Shoshones were driven back over the Rocky Mountains by invaders from the east. The Comanches became a discrete entity and one of the first, if not the first, of the Plains tribes to acquire horses.[1]

. . .

The Comanche cultural background was that of the so-called "Digger Indians" of the Great Basin. In the tradition of these tribes there was no great social organization. People moved and lived in small isolated family bands. Each was autonomous and economically self-sufficient on a low subsistence level. Religion was vaguely defined and almost wholly devoid of ceremonial structure. Arts were thin, and life offered little of richer satisfactions. War was a thing to be avoided, for the Basin Shoshoneans had no military organization and were wholly lacking in fighting prowess.[2]

In the Plains the Comanches never wholly shed this heritage, but in the new setting they wrought some mighty changes in their way of life. With adequate food resources and the horse they were able to prosper in numbers and so to enlarge the size of their bands. Yet they never forsook band autonomy for tribal government. Religion remained to the very end almost wholly an individual enterprise with few group rituals and no tribal ceremonials.

It was in warring and raiding that the great transformation took place.

[1] Ernest Wallace and E. A. Hoebel, *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains* (Norman, 1952) pp. 3–16.

[2] J. H. Steward, *Basin–Plateau Aboriginal Socio-political Groups* (Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 120, 1938).